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- To present theoretical and research papers in scientific graphology according to academic standards.
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- To provide an exchange with the international professional graphological community.

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## THE COMPATIBILITY OF THE COUPLE

*Vincenza De Petrillo*

**ABSTRACT:** The graphological counselor can help couples have a better understanding of each other. This article discusses the significance of projection and communication in relation to couple compatibility. The foundations of the Moretti system of graphology, and the basic elements of the system for assessing couple compatibility, are explained. Descriptions of couples are given reflecting handwritings with contrasting dynamics, similarities, and dissimilarities that are compatible.

One of the many fields of applied graphology is the compatibility of the couple, which is of endless fascination to me and is the subject of my graphological research.

Since the topic I'll be discussing is incredibly vast, I've had to be selective with my material, and confine myself to the following questions:

**What is the graphological counselor for couples expected to accomplish?**

**How can compatibility be "measured"?**

**What does a graphologist do when assessing compatibility?**

As a first step, I would like to say that choice of one's partner is a multifactorial matter. It is influenced by a long chain of events that contribute to the makeup of personality. In other words, the structure of one's Self and one's Self-image will have a certain influence on the choice itself.

Moreover, if the individual is subjected to numerous repressions throughout his psychosexual development, as an adult he will have a distorted image of reality. Thus, reality will not be perceived objectively, but will be colored with all the projections the individual will have been forced to resort to. Good qualities can also be projected onto the Other. In this case, the individual, not able to recognize them within himself, longs for them and searches for them outside of himself. In addition, one can project onto others the ability to fulfill one's own needs. These are the projections that often lead to "illusions of love." They are ultimately the outcome of the urge of the individual to idealize the Other or create a fantasy-image to his own liking so that the Other can fulfill those needs left unsatisfied in his infancy.

Of course, I am not speaking of the harmoniously structured personality, which is not distressed by grave disappointments because of its ability to cope with reality adequately and sensibly.

I am referring here to the people with a defect in self-esteem (either undervaluation or overvaluation of the Self).



I have noticed more often than not that people with low self-esteem easily resort to projective identifications. As a matter of fact, we could say, the lower the self-esteem the higher the need for projection.

Increasing one's self-esteem enhances communication. The capacity to communicate is at the core of good compatibility between couples, but I'll come back to that later. The integrated and well-balanced personality knows himself/herself quite well and can see the Other, his/her partner, just as he/she is. If a problem arises, the individual is likely to look at it objectively and find a realistic solution to it.

Most of the couples I have met have some difficulty with problem solving. They usually tend to undervalue themselves. Each partner tries to disguise his/her own difficulties by erecting defenses.

Coming back to the first question, I think that one of the main tasks of the graphologist – especially when a distressed couple comes along – is to help each party to understand the other better. If the graphologist succeeds in helping the couple see reality more objectively and realistically, he/she is likely to help the parties communicate more effectively.

Now here we come to the core of the matter: communication. Communication and compatibility are deeply interrelated. One criterion for assessing compatibility is the ability of the two parties to communicate.

What is communication? Among the several definitions, there is one I prefer. It reads: "Exchange of symbols intended to create common significations." The keyword here is "exchange." If two personalities are alike, what can they exchange?

In such a case, communication is unlikely to develop. If they both have the same traits, the same qualities, or the same defects, they find it hard to interact, that is to say, to have an effect on each other. Thus, the relationship between the parties is neither stimulating nor enriching.

I've read that no exchange takes place between two communicating vessels of the same height when both are filled up with the same fluid at the same temperature. That also applies to the relationship between two similar parties: no exchange, no mutual exchange, no interaction. Eventually they might find themselves a sort of pond. But life is energy in motion, something flowing, not stagnating. As far as I can see, too many similarities do not contribute to self-actualization. Each of the parties cannot fully realize his or her potential.

And what happens if the parties are very unlike? They may feel drawn to each other at the beginning, but in the long run they find it difficult to understand each other. Again, they can hardly exchange anything. Their frames of mind are too different to make communication possible. Eventually they are like two strangers.

Think of a magnet. What happens if we bring it close to a piece of wood? No interaction. They have nothing in common. The properties of a magnet are totally different from those of wood. But the magnet will attract an article which contains iron because they have something in common despite their differences. The parties are like-

ly to be able to interact and get on well together when they are partly similar and partly different.

Compatibility is possible when there is a balance of similarities and contrasts between the two parties. The former help them understand each other, whereas the latter help them complement and enrich each other.

As to the second question, it is my experience that similarity and complementarity are the criteria for assessing compatibility. When we say "compatibility" we mean the possibility of building a relationship offering enough guarantees for the mutual fulfillment of biological, psychological, intellectual, and social factors.

And the third question, what does a graphologist do when assessing compatibility? First, he/she looks at each writing very carefully. After analyzing each writing – individually – the graphologist assesses the dynamic interrelationship of the various signs occurring in the two writings and between the two writings themselves. In other words, both writings have to be analyzed in a systematic and interactive way.

Before giving a brief description at what a Morettian graphologist looks at in the writings of a couple, let me say a few things about the Moretti system. This system provides an in-depth analysis into the individual. Father Moretti was always searching for individuality. He was very interested in finding out what it was that made two individuals different from each other. What appealed to him was the individual's uniqueness.

The Moretti system consists of about one hundred signs which Moretti called "gestures in motion." That means they are considered from a dynamic perspective and not just with regard to their form.

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE MORETTI SYSTEM

- Fundamentally, handwriting, when spontaneous, reveals the innate tendencies of the individual.
- Each graphological sign concerns the whole personality. (Since man is a psychosomatic unity, each sign is a reflection of the physiological and psychological structure of the writer.)
- Each sign is quantifiable; it can be measured in tenths.
- Each graphological sign is subject to the influence of the environment. (No component of writing can be given a single or universal interpretation. Basically interpretation depends on the context within the overall writing. There are, then, no fixed signs.)
- Curvature (social instinct) and angularity (instinct for self-preservation) are pivotal categories. When in equilibrium, they signify that the individual is well-balanced, with a good level of sociability. It is worth recalling that Father Moretti attached great importance to the successful socialization of instincts, and laid



stress on the individual's ability to adjust and integrate into the world of reality.

- The Four Temperaments (Assault, Resistance, Giving, Waiting) are based on the notion of curvature and angularity. [See prior article in this Journal.]
- Each graphological sign belongs to one of the Four Temperaments. For example, scripts where letter extensions show concavity toward the right belong to the temperament of Giving. Small inter-letter spacing belongs to the temperament of Resistance. Scripts where letter extensions show concavity toward the left and where lines progressively rise upwards belong to the temperament of Assault, and so on.
- The signs are also divided into Essentials, Modifiers, and Accidentals.
- To sum up, we can break down the analytic process into five steps:
  1. PASSIVE CONTEMPLATION (Allows the writing to "speak to us.")
  2. IDENTIFICATION (Signs are considered in isolation.)
  3. QUANTIFICATION (Measures the dominant signs and their degree of intensity.)
  4. CLASSIFICATION (Essentials, Modifiers, and Accidentals are indicated.)
  5. INTERACTION (Considers groups of signs and their dynamic interrelationships.)

## THE MOST BASIC ELEMENTS IN ASSESSING COMPATIBILITY FROM A GRAPHOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

- **PRESSURE**, which is the reflection of the innate constitution. It indicates the level of vitality (intensity of instincts) and the level of sensitivity.
- **MOVEMENT**, which tells us how the vital energy is structured, and how the energy is distributed among different graphic categories. It gives us information about the individual's reaction time which can be slow or fast. I call it "pace," "tempo," like in music. It ranges between very calm and precipitate. If the pace of two individuals is too different, the parties will find it very hard to catch up with each other, physically and psychologically.
- **CURVATURE/ANGULARITY**, which reveals the level of adaptability, tolerance, and helpfulness.
- **TRIPLE WIDTH**, which is one of the main features of the Moretti System. It consists of the interrelationship of letter width, spacing between letters, and spacing between words. Width of an individual letter indicates the capacity for understanding – how much the person is able to comprehend about the Self and the Other, both intellectually and emotionally. Spacing between letters indicates the space and the time the subject devotes to evaluating the demands of the social world. Spacing between words, when present to an average degree, suggests reasoning power, critical ability, reflectiveness. When a script shows a well-balanced Triple Width, this means that the writer has good mental organization and presents evaluative and emotional equilibrium.

## HANDWRITINGS OF COUPLES

The following are handwriting samples of couples to illustrate what I have been trying to point out so far. The first couple is a traveling salesman, male, aged 45 (Figure 1) and a shopkeeper, female, aged 42 (Figure 2.) His handwriting is small, rather obscure, connected and thrown in its movement, rightward slanted, with wide inter-letter spacing, a stable baseline, breaks in the rhythm, and some irregularities in the size, slant, and spacing.

The dominant signs in the rather tall-narrow writing of his wife are clear straight strokes, disconnected, upright (slightly leftward slanted), restrained movement due to careful letter formation, and a stable baseline. If we compare the intensity of the vital energy we can say it is more or less the same – not a great deal of difference. What *does* differ is the rhythm. In his handwriting there is a dominance of the forces of liberation over those of constraint, where as it's the opposite in her handwriting.

Neither writing shows a substantial degree of curvature, which indicates that each party does not find it easy to meet the others needs. In a different way, they are both concerned with their own needs. As for the Triple Width, it is not so well balanced in either writing.

But let's evaluate each one closer. From the dynamic interrelationships of the various signs we can infer that, for the man, intuition prevails over reasoning and critical evaluation (Quick + Thrusting + Word Spacing below average). He is creative, lively, active, frank, and impulsive. When interested in something, he tends to throw himself into it without considering the consequences of his actions (Quick + Thrusting + Connected + Profuse + Impatient).

His writing presents contradictory tendencies: he goes forward quickly but at the same time wants to look at things in depth (Small + Meticulous + Twisted [letter slants bend against each other]). These inner contradictions generate restlessness and instability that make it difficult for him to concentrate on anything for a long time. He is friendly: he enjoys company as long as the people around him please him and do not criticize him. Otherwise, he can react quite abruptly (Quick + Angle A [blunt or pointed angles at the base of small letters] + Twisted + Impatient + Small + Meticulous).

He is rather indulgent when judging people who give him space and flatter him (Rhythm + Wide Interletter Spacing + Rightward Slant). His capacity to communicate is reduced by his tendency to jump to conclusions, which keeps him from listening carefully to what he is being told. He can even misunderstand what the other is saying. The measure of understanding and of adaptability are limited by his "high frequencies."

On the emotive level, his writing (Thrusting + Quick + Connected + Rightward Slanted) shows passion, a difficulty in self-control. His feelings are deep but rather unstable. His impulsiveness is harmless because, basically, he is quite sensitive. He's



un essere che è,  
Fell. Direzione 12978 lei  
1. Promozione scientifica

V. prego di voler mi inviare  
un sollecitazione qualche Mod. 9/CA.  
(comunicazioni oneprofiche) del  
quale sto sinceramente sperando.  
Ringraziando per l'attenzione  
e cordiali saluti.

Figure 1: male, age 45

12978 lei C. Benedetti f.  
Ringraziando per l'attenzione, in  
attesa di un Vostro cenno,  
colgo l'occasione per inviare  
cordiali saluti ed auguri.

Figure 2: female, age 42



got neither the strength nor the temperament of the destructive aggressor.

What about her? She is cautious; she weighs the pros and cons before taking any step. This restrains her impulses. Her instinctual drives are held back and self-consciousness prevails (Clear + Accurate + Upright + Straight Strokes).

While her husband throws himself into situations, she always tries to keep her distance, and to have everything clear and under control. She isn't easily receptive to the Other. She may even show something different from what she feels (Leftward Slanted + Disconnected + Accurate).

Where there's concealment of genuine thoughts and feelings, there is a defense. As a matter of fact, she is rich in feelings, but she is afraid to show them. The writer perceives them as something that can disturb the structure the Ego has constructed for itself. She thinks a lot before making up her mind, but then, that is it: she doesn't change her decision. It has cost her much time and energy. There is evidence of resistance of outer as well as inner obstacles. This interferes with adaptability (Small Interletter Spacing + Leftward Slant + Angle B [blunted or pointed angles at base and elsewhere in the letter, especially ovals]).

What made one party attracted to the other? He is creative and effervescent; she is reflective and organized. He is expansive; she is reserved. She was attracted to him by his liveliness. He was attracted to her by her reliability: she looks calm and self-confident. As a matter of fact she is not (Context + Diminishing + Hesitant + Wavering). They are both rather unstable. Were they aware of that at the beginning of their story?

Both partners fell in love with the fantasy image each had about the other rather than with the real person. The couple is at a crucial point of their love story. What would the graphologist suggest in this case?

If they want to save the relationship, they must work on themselves. He should learn to adjust his reactions and to channel his creativity. She should learn to give space to her feelings. She has frozen them. In other words, he should slow down his pace; she should speed up her own.

Surely there would be mutual advantages out of it for both of them: his actions could be more fruitful, so he would get more satisfaction from them and feel less restless. If she opened her heart she would feel warmer inside and more relaxed.

If they both don't change a little, there could be a rift in the pair: he assaults and she resists, she resists and he assaults. He likes conquering. Eventually they might break up. Had I met them at the beginning of their story I would have said: "rather low degree of compatibility."

Now I will give a few sketchy observations of this vivacious couple, the man (Figure 3) and the woman (Figure 4.) He is the Chief Manager of the foreign department of an important bank in Italy. He is responsible for trading activities. She is Chief Clerk with the national social security. Whereas the relationship of the previous pair was rather asymmetrical (contrasts prevailed over similarities), here similarities prevail over contrasts.

e solo dopo un po' di  
 tempo stato contratto a un'agenzia  
 un po' - E neppure! era proprio  
 buono. Con tanto gusto a  
 farla (ed ad aldo che lo ha  
 spensierato) per averla avuto di  
 nuovo. E poi lei si rampegna

Figure 3: male

he Torale o me gho o di vorare.  
reccomparsi tanti cose, disastare  
fu tanti argomenti.  
Anche con me conosceri  
è stato bello ma continuo a  
vederli e fantasma

Figure 4: female



è la Terza persona -  
 È impiegata presso i telefoni di stato e  
 opera nelle sale stampa italiane con la  
 qualifica di dirigente di esercizio -  
 Io ho cinquantuno anni, ho conseguito il  
 diploma di geometra, sono stato impiegato  
 presso la poste con il posto di geometra  
 capo - . Adesso sono in pensione e svolgo  
 la libera professione -

Figure 5: male, age 51

lata stampare - il suo collega deve  
fare, sia quando è partita l'ora in  
va di rifiutarsi loro con carum esse

Comunque loro a certe per presso

hanno anche il panificio -

il loro non si preoccupare perché non  
ne ha detto di questo

Figure 6: female, age 49

The samples show a good level of pressure, rising lines, warm, precise stroke, large middle zone, agile rhythm, predominance of rounded forms, pretty good triple width – clear and individualized letter formations.

They use their energy effectively and purposefully with practical realism while expressing an interest in others. They have deep convictions and good discernment of situations (especially him). Their will power is strong. They are both motivated by the need for independence. They tend to be dominant and full of self-pride. The need for self-assertion could lead to symmetrical escalation.

I think this risk is avoided thanks to his flexibility above all. Moreover, each one is basically “available” for contact with the other. Neither party would like to lose it (curved context). They have moderate compatibility.

Finally, we have the handwriting of a 51-year old building surveyor (Figure 5) and that of his wife, aged 49 (Figure 6.)

If we compare both the overall pictures of their writings with those of the previous couple . . . the difference is really striking. But there is more mutual benefit to be derived here. Let us see why. The pressure for both is rather weak, especially in her writing. That means they feel before they can think. Thus, their attitude to reality is an emotional one. However, it does not provoke disturbance. Their deep sensuality together with a concern for morality causes worries about making the wrong decision as well as doing wrong or doing harm. They are capable of self-sacrifice; they are honest and reliable.

On the intellectual level, there are some differences and contrasts that can complement one another. He tends to examine everything in minute detail before taking the initiative. She is more practical and wastes little time with useless details. She can help him to have a wider field of vision. In turn, he can help her see things that she has missed.

This can be very rewarding for him. He is more reflective and methodical; she is more imaginative as well as organized. He is very conscientious in carrying out his responsibilities and can be rather obstinate. She can help him to take it easier. She is tactful and knows how to handle him when he feels tense. She can be witty and playful. In turn, he can reassure her when she feels anxious. (Look at some displaced and uneven pressure, and suspended final strokes in her writing.)

The point I'm trying to make clear here is that they alternate symmetrical positions and asymmetrical ones. What makes them a fine pair is their ability to exchange their roles. The more rigid the distribution of roles, the weaker the relationship.

Altogether, the level of compatibility is fairly good here. It's very rare to come across samples showing a high level of compatibility. Some pair are healthy and well matched, but only very few indeed are made of self-actualized people. Anyway, I am deeply convinced that almost any relationship can be improved if one works on it constructively.



## SUMMARY

Now I would like to go back to the questions I set forth in the beginning of my talk and sum up the content of my answers.

### **What is the graphological counselor for couples expected to accomplish?**

- To help the couple see reality as objectively as possible, meaning here, to be aware of what each party can expect from the other. Any expectation must be realistic. Sometimes great expectations turn into delusion and disappointment. It is the defense mechanism of Projection which often keeps us from seeing the other as he or she really is.
- To provide an advisory service about the level of compatibility.
- To point out obstacles to mutual understanding and to suggest how to overcome them.

### **How can compatibility be measured?**

- Similarity and complementarity are constant parameters.

### **What does a graphologist do when assessing compatibility?**

- The graphologist portrays each personality, taking into consideration:
  1. Characteristics of intelligence;
  2. Level of vitality and receptive intensity;
  3. Level of reactivity and emotivity (It is worth mentioning here that emotivity is a treasure if the individual rules/masters it, if he manages to channel it. It turns into a terrible weakness when he is not able to direct it. For instance, strong/heavy Pressure + Spasmodic + Slow indicate emotions are held back, and once stored up may cause sudden outbursts);
  4. Introversion/extroversion;
  5. Level of socialization and of spontaneity;
  6. Level of understanding, helpfulness, adaptability;
  7. Level of self-consistency, stability, reliability;
  8. Emotional characteristics;
  9. Intensity and characteristics of psychophysical sexuality.

From a strictly graphological point of view, Pressure, Rhythm, Curvature/Angularity, and Triple Width are the basic elements in assessing compatibility. I should mention "Ricci" as well. I'll just say very briefly that this term applies to any additional stroke – either straight or curled – at the beginning or end of a word. These additional strokes are often referred to as a "fugitive gesture" because that is where the unconscious turns out to be clearly visible. In other words, it is where the conscious fails to keep the unconscious under control. These additional strokes reveal the writer's most characteristic attitudes and behavioral traits. Ricci are like "pilot fish which lead one to the Temperaments."

- The graphologist assesses the dynamic interrelationship. (More specifically, he concentrates his attention on the emotional dynamic interrelationship; that is what counts most in the couple's life.)
- The graphologist detects similarities, contrasts, opportunities for integration, which equal the measure of mutual fulfillment.

I would like to conclude with one personal opinion. I am totally convinced that the more helpful graphology is to mankind, the greater its value. As I said earlier, once the graphologist points out the obstacles to communication, he should try his best to suggest how to overcome them. Whenever possible, he should stress the assets, that is, the resources the couple possesses from which they could start the relationship all over again. I think a separation is quite often very painful, especially if young children are involved. There is no winner in breaking up . . . I am afraid. Anyway, it goes without saying, the graphologist must always comply with the couple's final decision.

**BIOGRAPHY:** Vincenza De Petrillo initially obtained her academic degree in foreign literature at La Sapienza University, Rome, in 1978. She earned her diploma from the Scuola diretta a fini speciali de studi grafologici (1988-1991) in Urbino and now teaches graphology at L.U.M.S.A. University, Rome. She is a member of the British Academy of Graphology (B.O.A.G.) and founder member of the Associazione Nazionale Consulenti Grafologi (A.N.C.G.). Ms. De Petrillo has lectured in London for B.O.A.G and in The Hague for N.V.S.G. She is most interested in individual and compatibility analyses. Vincenza De Petrillo co-wrote, with Alessandra Millevolte, the book *The Application of the G. Moretti Graphological System* (in English), published by Brain Edizioni, Rome, 2000.